

R 122104Z MAY 09  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO USMISSION GENEVA

UNCLAS STATE 048479

PASS IEA FOR D.SALAZAR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECPS](#) [AORC](#) [ITU](#)

SUBJECT: ITU TELECOMMUNICATION STANDARDIZATION ADVISORY  
GROUP MEETING, APRIL 28-30, 2009

¶1. Summary. This is a report of the results of a meeting of the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group (TSAG), which met for three days in Geneva from April 28-30, 2009. TSAG is a meeting of Member States and Sector Members of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). It is responsible for reviewing the ITU Telecommunication Sector (ITU-T) priorities, work programs, operations, financial matters and strategies. It provides guidelines for the work of the study groups. It advises the Director of the TSB on corrective measures to achieve the objectives set forth in the operational plan.

There were eleven people on the U.S. delegation. The delegation was led by James Ennis, EEB/CIP/MA from the State Department. The delegation included representatives from Commerce (NTIA), FCC, and DHS. From the private sector, companies represented on the delegation included AT&T, Cisco, Alcatel-Lucent, and Telcordia. These individuals included the Chairmen of two of the ten ITU-T Study Groups.

¶2. As an initial matter, we understand that the current Chair of TSAG, John Visser, formerly of Nortel, may not be able to continue because he has no funding to attend future meetings. If he does not find funding and has to step down, he would be replaced by one of the current Vice-Chairs of TSAG. The front runner to replace Visser would probably be the U.S. Vice-Chair, Steve Trowbridge. However, Steve says that he is in an operational part of his company, Alcatel-Lucent, and would not be able to devote the 80% of his time that the Chairmanship of TSAG would require.

¶3. Another item of note is that the Director of the TSB, Malcolm Johnson, appears to be already running for re-election, and to this end is courting the votes of developing countries. This manifests itself in various ways. An example at this meeting was his strongly expressed desire to hold the next TSAG meeting on dates that are adjacent to the meeting of the Telecommunication Development Advisory Council (TDAG) meeting, to enable developing countries to attend both meetings. This would have placed the TSAG meeting in the middle of the week when Geneva is having a car show and when there are no hotel rooms to be had at a reasonable price. (The decision as to the location of the next TSAG meeting is now being re-studied.)

¶4. This meeting itself was a preview of several issues that will be probably be discussed at the ITU Council at its meeting in October 20-30, 2009.

ITU Mark. WTSa Resolution 76 addresses the issue of the creation of an ITU mark. It instructs the Director of the TSB to take a number of steps in that regard. He is to:

- (a) conduct exploratory activities in each region in order to identify and prioritize the problems developing countries face related to achieving interoperability of ICT equipment and services;
- (b) based on the results of (1), study the effect on the ITU and the manufacturers; the legal and international regulatory implications; the costs of setting up a testing facility and location of such a facility; and what needs to be done to build-up the human resources necessary for such an effort;
- (c) study the concept of establishing an ITU mark to indicate that equipment that conforms to the ITU mark has a degree of interoperability with other such equipment;

- (d) to study the financial and legal implications for the ITU-T and for ICT industries, and all other concerns raised;
- (e) to involve experts and external entities as appropriate.

WTSA Resolution 76 also instructs the Study Groups to identify as soon as possible existing and future ITU-T Recommendations that would be candidates for interoperability and to modify them so that they could serve as a basis for conducting conformity and interoperability tests.

15. The Director gave a summary of where the TSB is in this process. He said that the experts in (4) above were volunteers and that they were from various regions and he was relying on them to address (a) above, namely to identify the problems that developing countries had with interoperable equipment. It was agreed that other experts could ask to be on the TSAG team. However, the question remains whether the Director's approach meets the spirit of the obligation to conduct exploratory activities in each region in order to identify the problems they face in achieving interoperability. It was the view of the delegation that the Director has already concluded that there is a need for an ITU Mark and therefore is only paying lip service to the Res 76 requirement that he investigate the nature of the developing-country problem that we are trying to solve.

The U.S. joined with Portugal and Finland in associating with a German contribution that stated that the Director of the TSB needs to be complete the first three work items in paragraph 4 above before the Study Groups should have to identify recommendations that are potential candidates. However, this was a minority opinion.

16. Climate change. TSAG decided that the Study Group 5 should be the lead Study Group on climate change. The name of Study Group 5 was changed to "Environment and Climate Change." In addition, a Joint Coordination Activity (JCA) "which is a coordination activity involving all the Questions in all the ITU-T Study Groups that have an interest in climate change and the environment" was created. It will report to SG5, but TSAG will also be kept informed of the JCA's work. The terms of reference for this JCA were drafted and approved at this meeting. The U.S. supported these decisions but took a reservation on the new name for SG5 because it believed the title should not include the word change.

17. Paperless meetings. The U.S. submitted a contribution to the TSAG meeting saying that in its view, completely paperless Study Group meetings were not desirable and that up to two sets of the most important documents at a Study Group meeting should be made available to each delegation upon request. Subsequently, the U.S. modified this position to apply only to policy-level ITU-T meetings, namely Study Groups 2, 3, and TSAG. However, at the meeting the chairman of Study Group 17 (a technical Study Group) said Study Group 17 also did not want paperless meetings. Study Group 17 proposed twenty sets of documents, to be made available on a first-come, first-serve basis. The final language that was agreed upon was that "it was generally agreed that we should aim for less paper at meetings and for as many paperless meetings as possible." This language, in the view of the delegation, provides no specific direction for the ITU-T to follow and therefore will not resolve the matter.

18. Duration and frequency of TSAG meetings. The U.S. submitted a contribution saying that TSAG meetings should typically be five days long in order for it to deal with its work. It also proposed that TSAG meetings should coincide with Study Group meeting cycles, or about every 8-9 months. France strongly supported the U.S. However, the Director argued that the Council, at its meeting in November 2008, had dictated that there would only be one TSAG meeting in 2009. With respect to TSAG meetings in 2010, notwithstanding the U.S. position, the Chair concluded that TSAG should have one meeting for three days in the first quarter of 2010. He gave no explanation as to why he reached this conclusion.

In the view of the U.S. delegation, the decision to recommend a three day TSAG meeting next year was an extremely poor decision which should be reviewed by Council. This current meeting was a three-day meeting and it was manifestly obvious that there was not enough time to get through the work. Whole blocs of issues were adopted without any discussion. Other issues were postponed to the next meeting. Still others were given only cursory discussion. It was also clear to the delegation that almost all the cost of a TSAG meeting is the cost of translation. Since translation is not necessary except in the plenary meetings, the length of a TSAG meeting can be extended to five days without significantly increasing the cost of the meeting simply by meeting in Working Party sessions for three days, sandwiched between opening and closing plenary days.

¶9. Changes to ITU-T Recommendation A.23. This agenda item illustrates the problems caused by a three-day meeting. ITU-T Recommendation A.23 relates to collaboration with ISO and IETC. Annex A to A.23 is a Guide this collaboration. It is a normative part of the recommendation. A 75-page contribution modifying this Annex was submitted to this TSAG meeting. It contains changes throughout the Annex. No one introduced this document or explained what the changes were about. The Chair asked that it be determined at this meeting, meaning that all the parties present at the meeting considered that the changes were acceptable. The explanation the chair gave was that there was no time to review the document and that any fixes to the language could be made during the TAP review period that follows determination. Germany, Russia, and the U.S. objected, saying we had no idea what these changes were. France supported the Chair's proposal. Despite this, the Chair concluded there was consensus in favor of approving/determining the document.

¶10. The next meeting of TSAG is scheduled to be held in Switzerland for three days in the first quarter of 2010. The exact date has not yet been decided.

CLINTON